

NEWS FROM:



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Award recipient puts spotlight on mental health in disadvantaged communities

In recognition of his contribution to welfare-related research, Professor Dan Stein, head of UCT's Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, was awarded the prestigious Alan Pifer Research Award on 24 March 2010.

The annual award honours UCT researchers whose welfare-related work has contributed to the advancement and welfare of South Africa's disadvantaged people. Stein's research focuses on the psychobiology and management of anxiety disorders, including posttraumatic stress disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. His work ranges from basic neuroscience to epidemiological and cross-cultural research.

Stein and his colleagues recently undertook the first nationally representative epidemiological study of mental illness in Africa, published in 2009 in the South African Medical Journal. This research led to the key finding that although there is significantly more impairment associated with mental illness than with physical disorders, mental disorders are less likely to receive treatment. With his team, Stein has also conducted some of the first research on mental disorders in patients with HIV/AIDS, examining how these disorders can be rigorously screened through the use of short questionnaires.

Stein is the director of both the Medical Research Council's Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders and UCT's Brain-Behaviour Initiative.

In receiving the award, worth R10 000, Stein expressed his passion for his field of study: "The brain is the sexiest and most challenging of organs, and psychiatry is so rewarding because it is the medical speciality that's most interested in people." Stein also thanked his family, who attended the function. "They forgive me for being a workaholic, and they also keep me sane," he said.

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